

PEOPLE & THINGS: By ATTICUS

The Most Beautiful

Coins in the World



Gold Aureus of the Emperor Postumus, Cologne c. A.D. 264. (Mr. R. A. G. Carson.)



The Silver Penny of Edward the Elder, Chester, c. A.D. 920. (Mr. R. H. M. Dolley.)



Gold Stater of Philipinus, Greece c. 106 B.C. (Dr. J. Walker, Keeper.)



Silver Tetradrachm of Rhesium, c. 420 B.C. (Mr. G. K. Jenkins.)

WHEN I read that Professor Grant, President of the Royal Numismatic Society, finds little beauty in the whole of our current range of coins, I visited the British Museum and asked the Keeper of Coins and Medals and his four Assistant Keepers which coins they considered the most beautiful in the world. Here, reproduced about half-size is their choice. Ironically enough, the Keeper's choice is only an electrolyte copy and is one of the few great classical coins not in the British Museum. The noble coin in the centre is the Mithridate Gold Solidus of Constantius II, Nicomedia c. A.D. 355. It was chosen by Dr. J. P. C. Kent.

Women Spies

SOME surprise has been expressed that the Russians employ women so extensively in their Intelligence service, but this is in fact common practice over the whole of this shadowy battlefield.

Women are, however, almost exclusively employed on administration and their occasional excursions "into the field" are usually for the purpose of making an initial contact. Thus Mme Petrova was an Intelligence officer rather than a spy, as is the senior woman in the M.V.D., Mme Rybkin in the Khokhlov case, who holds the rank of colonel and is probably the most powerful woman in the world of espionage.

Closed Shop

THE reasons why, contrary to popular belief, women are rarely used as active agents are

given by the man whom I regard as the most formidable spy in history—Richard Sorge, the German Communist, who ran a powerful Far Eastern network for Russia during the last war.

I have seen an advance copy of Mr. Francis Noel-Baker's "The Spy Web," which is coming from the Batchworth Press in a few days' time. He quotes Sorge as saying: "Women are absolutely unfit for espionage work. They are in the way of political and other affairs, and I have never received satisfactory information from them. . . . Even upper-class women have no comprehension of what has been said by their husbands and are, therefore, very poor sources of information. . . . In my opinion, a woman in the world has the aptitude for espionage work. . . . In the last analysis espionage operations must be performed by a man with a good education and a clear mind."

Wise Man

THE choice of Dr. Lin Yu-tank as Chancellor-designate of the new Nanyang University at Singapore is a brilliant one. At present in New York, he will be coming to London at the end of August to recruit staff and place orders for equipment for the University. Dr. Lin Yu-tank is a prototype of the humanist upon whom the future good sense of the world depends—a modern philosopher who has succeeded in marrying the main streams of Eastern and Western thought. And he is light-headed. Three grains of realism, two of dreams, two of humour and one of sensitivity make an Englishman, he says. He rates the Chinese as R/4, D/1, H/3 S/3, and the Russians as R/2, D/4, H/1 and S/2.

But of all peoples he says: "My faith in human dignity consists in

the belief that man is the greatest scamp on earth. The scamp is probably the most glorious type of human being."

Accommodating Venus

ONE of the most agreeable surprises of last winter, alike on the stage and on the television screen, was Mr. Dmitri Makarov's production of "Hamlet" in Russian.

I fancy, therefore, that connoisseurs of oddity in the theatre will aim to be in Bodmin on the fifteenth and sixteenth of this month when Mr. Makarov's "Muses of Fire" players will present "Twelfth Night" in Russian—and, what is more, in modern dress.

Illyria will be treated, he tells me, as a fantastic reflection of contemporary England. The stage will be dominated throughout by the figure of the Venus of Syracuse, with her drapes blown by the sea-wind. The base of the statue will serve alike as Malvolio's prison and as the wireless-set whence issues the "music of love" which is to be drawn it seems, from Richard Strauss.

Historic Penguin

ON July 30, 1935, was published the first Penguin book, André Maurois's "Ariel," and nervously the publishers bound up only ten thousand of the twenty thousand copies that were printed.

At the end of this month, exactly nineteen years later, Penguin will publish their thousandth book—"One of Our Submarines," by Edward Young, which is one of the classics of the last war.

By a curious coincidence, it was this same Edward Young, then a part-time typographer, who

designed the famous Penguin cover. To mark the fact, Penguin's have paid him the delicate but doubled-edged compliment of dressing up his true narrative of the Submarine Service in Young's original design in orange and white, which happen to be the colours reserved even since "Ariel" for Penguin fiction!

Conte Drolatique

THE prime Minister of France is not, at this moment, the most envied of men, but I learn from Monsieur Mendès-France's autobiographical "Liberté, Liberté Oubliée" that he has faced more critical situations.

In 1941, for instance, he escaped from the prison hospital in Lyons. With sheets duly knotted and leg thrust over the parapet, he was belted in mid-flight by the sound of voices in the room below. "I soon realised," he writes, "that the warder had with him a young lady. Their immediate programme was being earnestly discussed. I knew just what he wanted; she was less certain. There ensued the immemorial argument. 'That warder had not learnt his command! But at last she said yes. . . .'"

And the future Prime Minister, charmingly comments: "On the dread day when we all have to account for our actions before our Creator I shall take upon myself that young lady's indiscretion, for I desired it even more ardently than did her sister."

Crossed Pens

AFCAR novelist cabled this virulent article of her latest best-seller: "How can you be so cruel. I was so upset by your review that I cried all the way to the bank."